

I write in support of HB 5262, because it aligns our statutes with the language of our Constitution. My name is Lawrence Rizzolo, Professor Emeritus of the Yale School of Medicine. These comments are my own and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Yale University.

The Constitution mentions illness as a reason for obtaining an absentee ballot. Unlike current statutes it does not specify the voter's illness. This is an important, prescient distinction, as caregivers are also affected by their patient's illness. Caregivers are essentially on call 24/7. They cannot predict when their patient, family member or otherwise, needs their undivided attention. In institutions, a caregiver would have responsibility for many patients, any of whom might need acute care at any time. Especially now when caregivers are in such great demand.

There are at least three issues:

- 1) A voter might be highly susceptible to infectious disease (e.g., elderly or immune-compromised) and voting would force them to be in a crowded indoor environment that they would otherwise avoid.
- 2) It may be difficult for a caregiver to arrange time to wait at a polling location.
- 3) In times of highly contagious pathogens, caregivers risk getting infected in a crowded polling location and then infecting their vulnerable patient.

Who can say whether, or when, a highly contagious virus might emerge, and public health officials recommend extreme caution?

My 98-year-old mother-in-law has lung disease and would be especially vulnerable to a respiratory infection introduced by her caregivers. It is unnecessary to place her at greater risk when absentee balloting was so successful in recent elections.

Restoring the original language of the Constitution would make voting safe and easy for our most vulnerable loved ones and those who care for them.

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